

AIRGRAM

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ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION
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DATE: February 4, 1965

AGR COM FRB

FROM : Amembassy WARSAW

INT LAB TAR

SUBJECT : Polish Popular Reactions to Prospect of Liberalized Immigration to U.S.

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REF : Warsaw's A-695, January 28

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In November 1964 the Embassy experienced a sudden increase in the in-person and mail inquiries about supposed possibilities for obtaining immigrant visas without a quota waiting period and without a sponsor in the United States. The rumors reported to the Embassy on this subject have been particularly concerned with an alleged cancellation of the usual sponsorship requirements, a hurdle which has become increasingly difficult in recent years for the nonpreference registrants in Poland.

The wave of inquiries in November and December was not explicitly related to President Johnson's statement shortly after the election with respect to the need for a liberalization of U.S. immigration laws. However, the tempo of inquiries and the variety of rumors about changes in the American visa situation stepped up sharply in mid January, just after the President's State of the Union message and his special message to the Congress concerning immigration, and there has been no abatement. It would definitely seem that the rumor mill in Poland has been fed indirectly by news events connected with the Administration's effort to reform the immigration laws.

As mentioned in Weeka No. 4 (Warsaw's A-695, January 28), the chief point of origin of the inquiries received by the Embassy has been Bialystok Province, interestingly the same area where the rumors about free immigration were concentrated in 1959 which touched off near riots at the Embassy. Bialystok is the No. 2 Polish province in the numbers of immigrants to the United States, but a poor second to Rzeszow Province in absolute figures.

The average immigrant from rural Bialystok is a simple man, and some of the more far-fetched rumors have reflected this fact. One of the

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rumors has Mrs. John F. Kennedy personally sponsoring Polish immigrants because of her affection for the Polish people. According to another, a group of prominent Americans has arranged for immigrants to settle a deserted U.S. island, receiving free land. A third story is that the Negroes are now fleeing the country because of stepped up persecution, so that the United States needs immigrants to increase its depleted population. The Warsaw office of a weekly rural newspaper (Zarzewia) actually telephoned the Embassy recently to ask, in all seriousness, if one of the abovementioned rumors was correct. The editorial office of a popular Sunday newspaper supplement (Kulisy) also telephoned a week ago to inquire in more general terms about a possible cancellation of sponsorship requirements for immigrants.

As can be seen from the rumor related to Negro persecution, Polish domestic propaganda about the United States has lent form to some of the rumors. Another example is a story which appeared in the fall of 1964 in the Polish press about the "ruthless exploitation" by American capitalists of Mexican wetback agricultural labor. Undaunted by the foreboding description of this capitalist evil, many Polish farm workers hopefully asked the Embassy's visa information desk if they could not be included in the program along with the Mexicans.

Short of a dramatic news development such as the passage by the Congress of a new quota law, there certainly seems to be no reason to fear a riot at the Embassy, or the gathering of such crowds as would hamper normal operations. Nevertheless, the rumors about immigration changes have created an administrative burden. Whereas in normal times the Embassy has an average of approximately two or three written, and one or two in-person, inquiries a week about a cancellation of sponsorship requirements or of quota waiting periods, these averages in the past two weeks have risen to an estimated 25 and twenty a day, respectively. The inquiries received since mid November about drastic changes in our visa regulations now number in the thousands. Registrations for immigration in November-January also reached a rate of several thousand a month, despite careful efforts by the Embassy to discourage registration applications based solely on the rumors, in order to forestall quota-control problems a few years from now which spurious registrations accepted at this time would cause. After a decline in the early 1960s, the annual total of registrations jumped in 1963 and again in 1964, and it now seems that 1965 could well provide an all-time postwar high.

For the Ambassador:



Walter B. Smith II
Second Secretary of Embassy

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